

Message Text

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E. O. 11652:NA
TAGS: UK MPOL NATO
SUBJECT: DEBATE ON RAF, APRIL 3

REF: A) LONDON 4111; B) LONDON 4195

1. JAMES WELLBELOVED (PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY FOR THE RAF) OPENED THE DEFENSE DEBATE ON THE RAF. WINSTON CHURCHILL (A CONSERVATIVE DEFENSE SPOKESMAN) REPLIED FOR THE OPPOSITION. AS FORESHADOWED IN THE EARLIER DEBATE ON THE DEFENSE WHITE PAPER (REFTELS), THE ISSUE OF SERVICE PAY AND MORALE ATTRACTED THE MOST ATTENTION AND GENERATED CONSIDERABLE PARTY POLITICAL HEAT. WELLBELOVED SAID THAT THE CABINET HAD NOW RECEIVED THE REPORT OF THE ARMED SERVICES PAY REVIEW BODY, BUT IT HAD NOT YET BEEN CONSIDERED BY THE GOVERNMENT. HE PROMISED THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO
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RESTORE THE PAY OF THE ARMED FORCES "TO FULL COMPARABILITY" UNDER THE MILITARY CONCEPT JUST AS SOON AS PAY POLICY PERMITS IT. CHURCHILL CONTENDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD GIVEN THE SERVICES THE "DIRTY END OF THE STICK" ON PAY AND HAD DONE MORE TO DAMAGE MORALE IN THE RAF IN THE PAST THREE YEARS THAN THE LUFTWAFFE DID IN SIX YEARS OF WAR. HE SAID THERE WAS A CRISIS

OF MORALE UNPRECEDENTED IN THE RAF'S 60 YEARS HISTORY.

2. WHILE RECOGNIZING THAT CONSTRAINTS OF PAY POLICY, REDUNDANCY POLICIES, AND THE REDUCTION IN THE SIZE OF THE RAF HAD CAUSED A GREAT DEAL OF CONCERN, WELLBELOVED PROMISED THAT AS THE UK'S ECONOMIC OUTLOOK IMPROVED THE SERVICES CAN LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING "THEIR FULL SHARE" OF THE BENEFITS THAT THIS WILL PRODUCE.

3. WELLBELOVED DID NOT DISCLOSE ANYTHING NEW CONCERNING EQUIPMENT FOR THE RAF. HE NOTED THE STATUS OF THE TORNADO PROGRAM EMPHASIZING THE "IMMENSE SUCCESS" OF THE COLLABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AND THE INTENTION TO TAKE IT BEYOND INTO AIRCREW CONVERSION TRAINING. HE NOTED THE FRG AND UK GOVERNMENTS HAD ALREADY AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF JOINT TRAINING FACILITIES AND THAT THEY AWAITED "CONFIRMATION" OF ITALIAN PARTICIPATION. WELLBELOVED ALSO SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONTINUING ITS STUDIES ON HOW BEST TO MEET THE REPLACEMENT REQUIREMENT FOR JAGUAR AND HARRIER AIRCRAFT. IN THIS CONNECTION HMG IS EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL FOR COLLABORATION WITHIN EUROPE.

4. CHURCHILL ROBUSTLY ATTACKED THE GOVERNMENT FOR ALLOWING THE RAF'S EQUIPMENT PROGRAM TO GET INTO A STATE OF DISARRAY. HE PROMISED THAT THE NEXT TORY GOVERNMENT WOULD ACCELERATE THE TORNADO PROGRAM AND PRE
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AHEAD WITH A NEW GENERATION OF AIRCRAFT TO REPLACE JAGUAR AND HARRIER. ALSO THEY WOULD GIVE URGENT CONSIDERATION TO STRENGTHENING THE DETERRENT CAPABILITY OF THE UK AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A CRUISE MISSILE SYSTEM.

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